

Teaching Management Strategies on 21st Century Islamic Education for Southernmost Thai Private Islamic Schools

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Teaching management has undergone a paradigm shift in the 21st century, from content-based to competency-based. The changing pedagogical landscape has posed a significant challenge to Islamic schools since many still adhere to traditional content-based instruction. To eliminate learning barriers and embrace modern education, this qualitative study investigated teaching management strategies for Islamic Education and key challenges that teachers encountered in cultivating global citizenship for learners. Data were collected from interviews focus group discussion and teaching observations with twelve school administrators and twelve Islamic education teachers, who were purposively selected from twelve schools in southern Thailand. Qualitative content analysis with data organization and classification identified that the schools employed six teaching management strategies to maneuver Islamic Education: emphasizing individual differences, integrating information and communication technology, associating off-class experiences, bridging localness with internationalness, integrating Science, and considering modern evaluation. Furthermore, the results revealed that the attitudes of the Islamic-education teachers were largely attached to conventional teaching styles, relied on subject matters that are less relevant to the needs of the global society, and developmental processes remained significantly ambiguous. Hence, these three challenges were found to be the prime obstructing factors of teaching capacities and adaptability that hindered educational cultivation for 21st-century global citizenship. This study proposes new instructional models for private Islamic schools to transform their teaching toward 21st-century education.

Keywords: private Islamic school, teaching Islamic education, 21st-century education, Islamic-education teacher, faith-based education

INTRODUCTION

Teaching Islamic Education could be extremely challenging today as educational-management paradigms have now shifted from content-based learning to learning-process and skills development for students (Ajmain, Mahpuz, Rahman, & Mohamad, 2019; Silber-Varod, Eshet-Alkalai, & Geri, 2019). Furthermore, advances in 21st-century competencies and information technology have opened the door for new jobs that did not exist earlier, and as such, the younger generation needs to get trained to fit into the new careers and shine. These dramatic and drastic changes in the orientation of educational development have imposed its own challenges on Islamic educators with respect to the subject and material of learning. Therefore, there is an urgent need for teaching strategies in Islamic education to embody Muslim students with the essential expertise and knowledge to tackle the current tendency of the 21st century as well as simultaneously help them spiritually grow towards becoming

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believers with desirable morals and ethics according to the Islamic teachings. Hence, it is literally inevitable for 21st-century instructional transformations in Islamic Education to face new challenges. Previously, the only significant challenge in transforming Islamic Education was Islamic-secular integration. Today, a new transformational issue has also emerged, i.e., the educational management of Islamic schools to teach Islamic Education in conjunction with competency and skill development for current and future societies (Bakoh & Assalihee, 2020; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; Uyuni & Adnan, 2020). For clarification, educational-management targets must be observed in ensuring that core Islamic subjects like Qur'an, Prophet habitual practice (Sunnah), Islamic History (Sirah), and Islamic Jurisprudents (Fiqh), are not marginalized to the periphery in pursuit of 21st-century competencies in Islamic schools. This only indicates that these two paths are not necessarily contradictory; rather they can be integrated and made complementary today and tomorrow. Confronting these marvels, Islamic analysis should make developments and identifies with the transformation of 21st century expertise and knowledge of worldview that incorporates the standards of revelation of data collection, processing, computerization, revelational sources, intellectual sources, soft skills manners, and technology integration into social sciences learning such as Islamic teaching approach in the digital era (Ajmain et al., 2019; Hidayat, Fatimah, & Rosidin, 2022).

Although there are already many existing studies on 21st-century Islamic Education (Hamrinee, Thamcharoen, & Benkan, 2016; Kuakul & Wae-useng, 2017; Songmuang & Kaenin, 2012), most of them primarily examined the conditions and readiness of Islamic-education teachers. More importantly, studies tailored to 21st-century education with an emphasis on competency development instead of content memorization remain inadequate. Consistently, previous studies provided evidence that many Islamic-education teachers still employed traditional teaching models and methods or emphasized content by giving lectures. These results also noted that the teachers still lacked the skills to integrate modern teaching methods into their deliveries of Islamic Education (Assalihee & Boonsuk, 2022; Kuakul & Wae-useng, 2017). Hence, this study aimed to directly explore the methods or strategies in teaching Islamic Education that the twelve model schools in Thailand implemented. The results of this study were projected to be beneficial as guidelines for all Islamic-education teachers in cultivating Islamic-school students towards quality and growth as global citizens in line with the changing needs of the 21st century that educational institutions have been attempting to address. On this note, questions were created and applied as research objectives to guide this academic investigation, and they included (a) What 21st-century teaching management strategies did the schools employ for Islamic Education? and (b) What challenges did the schools encounter while transforming the teaching of their Islamic Education?

Literature Review

Islamic Education in Thailand

Islamic Education is an educational discipline on Islam as a religion and civilization that does not limit its exploration to the relationship between humans and God as it also covers all aspects of life, including Science (Tolchah & Mu'ammar, 2019). Results from the First World Conference on Muslim Education, Saudi Arabia, in 1977 (Surajudeen, Mat, & Alizadegani, 2017) indicated that there was a mutual agreement that the goal of Islamic Education is to enhance and balance life quality at the individual and social levels so that learners could apply knowledge in everyday life to maintain happiness in multicultural communities, contribute to society with creativity and through critical thinking, and take responsibility in preserving personal and social benefits. Therefore, the education should focus on all aspects of individual and public development, e.g., spirituality, imagination,

physicality, Science, and linguistics, where such forms and approaches of curricular development could vary based on national contexts and scholars' ideologies (Franceschelli & O'Brien, 2014; Rosen, 2000). In ASEAN, Islamic schools have long existed since the 15th century as vital educational institutions for regional development of human resources, and (Margono, 2012) their significance remains until today. Apart from the countries with the majority of their citizens being Muslim (i.e., Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei), many Islamic schools can be found in other territories (i.e., Thailand, Cambodia, Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Singapore, and Timor-Leste). Furthermore, they remain crucial in domestic educational management and publicly recognized as institutions with constant popularity. Currently, there are many forms of Islamic schools (e.g., Parallel Islamic-secular schools, Pondok institutes, Madrasas, Quran institutes, Tadikas, and Islamic education centers in mosques). It was estimated that there are as many as 60,000 of the mentioned Islamic schools in ASEAN, and approximately 50,000 of them are in Indonesia alone. However, names and naming formats could differ across areas. For instance, in the Java and Kalimantan, these schools are known as Pasantrens and Pondok, whereas in Western Sumatra and Aceh, they are called Suraus and Dayahs, respectively (C. Tan, 2014). Schools that provide Islamic Education are both operated by the public and private sectors. More of them are now implementing integrated Islamic-secular curriculum with the aims to simultaneously foster secular and non-secular development, and modernize their school-administration systems to address the current educational dynamics (Isbah, 2020).

In Thailand, the teaching of Islamic Education began at Pondok institutes. In the early days, instructions were carried out independently without governmental regulations. The primary purpose of the learning was to transfer Islamic teachings, cultivate, and guide Muslim children towards becoming a better person with adequate knowledge and moral principles to practice Islamic activities correctly. The major transition of Pondok to today's Islamic private schools began in 1961, as the government allowed them to be registered and officially recognized. Subsequently, they were transformed into Islamic non-governmental schools in 1965-1968 and Islamic private schools in 1983 following the Private School Act, BE 2526 (1983). According to regulations, these private Islamic schools received subsidies to provide integrated Islamic-secular education. Based on the educational database of the Office of Private Education Commission in 2020 (Office of the Private Education Commission, 2020), most of these schools (i.e., over 170) are located in the southern region accommodating approximately 140,944 students and 11,610 teachers, (out of which includes over 5,000 Islamic-education teachers). On the teaching of Islamic Education, their curriculum and instructions have received constant development and revisions. Presently, Islamic Education Curriculum follows the Basic Education Core Curriculum, BE 2551 (Assalihee, Boonsuk, Bakoh, & Sano, 2020), which includes revisions for suitability and clarity, i.e., curricular objectives to address quality enhancement for students and implementational processes that respond to Thai political, economic, and social dynamics.

Skill Framework and Learning Management for 21st-Century Islamic Education

Twenty-first-century competencies and skills can be distinctively defined based on contexts and practical significance. In this study, the 21st century education framework was defined and classified into five categories including (Bourn, 2018; Chen & Huang, 2017; Griffin & Care, 2014; J. P.-L. Tan, Choo, Kang, & Liem, 2017) 1) moral values, ethical values, and self-conduct; 2) ways of thinking with creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making; and learning; 3) ways of working with communication and collaboration; 4) tools for working with information literacy, and information and communication technology literacy; and 5) living in the world with local and global citizenship, life and career skills, personal and social responsibilities, and cultural awareness. For the Islamic-education contexts, Waehama, songmuang, Assalihee, Boonsuk, & Saithon (2021) investigated Muslim societies in the three southern border provinces of Thailand to identify their need-based 21st-century skills and discovered that the skills could mainly be categorized into six groups: 1) thinking process, 2) personal attributes, 3) Islamic faith and practice, 4) communication,

5) integration of Islamic knowledge and 6) recognition of national citizenship. On this note, the findings appear to be in line with the skills as described in ATC21S.

Apparently, these skills reflect the fact that management approaches and goals for 21st-century education have dramatically evolved. Classrooms are transformed into a learning platform equipped with necessary elements to facilitate education that is consistent with current social contexts, including focuses on activities, practices, mutual support, and teamwork. Students are given opportunities to learn based on their needs, interests, and aptitudes; learning atmospheres are made flexible and modifiable according to such needs; and information technology is applied as critical tools in learning processes (JISC, 2006; Yuh & Thamrongsotthisakul, 2020). Trilling and Fadel (2009), similarly discussed educational modernization and reformation in the book titled “21st Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Time” that today’s educational focus must be shifted from teacher-centered to learner-centered, skills that are vital to the learning process (such as questioning and problem-solving) should receive higher priorities than knowledge, and pedagogies should promote practices (as opposed to theoretical lectures) that help students establish autonomous-learning skills. In terms of pedagogical applications in modernizing Islamic Education for 21st-century classrooms, it was found that most teachers in ASEAN did not possess sufficient knowledge, understanding, and expertise to apply 21st-century teaching strategies. On this note, it means that most of them were found to still employ lecture-based instructions and were unable to effectively integrate desirable 21st-century learning management. The main reasons behind the phenomenon were that the teachers did not see values in such transitions, were uncomfortable with changes, were unfamiliar with modern teaching methods, and were more comfortable with conventional teaching strategies. (Harun et al., 2019; Mustaffa & Rashid, 2018; Yousif, 2018)

METHOD

Private Islamic schools in the southern border provinces differ from typical Thai schools in contexts and identities. These schools employ the Islamic Studies Curriculum in parallel with the Basic Education Core Curriculum. Since situations and phenomena play a vital role in contextualizing targeted data, this study employed a qualitative design, via focus group discussions, interviews, and observations, to obtain the most accurate insights into the contexts and situations (Maher & Dertadian, 2018; Nassaji, 2020) of twelve Islamic schools in southern Thailand. Purposive sampling is used as the selection mechanism with the following inclusion criteria: 1) private Islamic schools that employ integrated curricula; 2) schools that offer secondary education for no less than six years with at least a class of year 12 having been graduated; 3) schools with a history of students with outstanding academic achievement or schools assessed with at least “good quality” following respective national assessment criteria; 4) schools that emphasize the 21st century’s student development; and 5) schools that grant permission for this study to collect the research data via interviewing, focus group, and observation.

The key informants included twelve school administrators and twelve Islamic education teachers. The inclusion criteria included the school administrators who had been on school-administration duties for at least five years and the teachers were that they must have been an education professional in a Islamic educational field with at least three years of field-specific teaching experience and at least 12 hours of teaching duties per week. Semi-structured questions were employed for data collection with a semi-structured interview and focus group discussion form as an instrument to guide and extract the most out of the sessions. The interview questions were created into three categories (Podhisita, 2013; Schwarze, Kaji, & Ghaferi, 2020) including 1) main questions which were pre-determined to address the research framework and goals; 2) probing questions which were designed to encourage further elaboration when answers to the main questions were not satisfactorily thorough; and 3) follow-up questions which were asked at the researchers’ discretion in cases when new or interesting points of

information emerged to ensure that more in-depth insights could be explored. Essentially, the main interview questions covered components of teaching strategies synthesized from concepts, as identified in the review of the literature. All questions were submitted to three experts for a suitability validation. Once validated, the questions were preliminarily employed with five teachers who share similar qualifications to the population purposively to determine whether they could provide accurate communication, stimulate the key informants to contribute data, and lead to a desirable understanding that matches the research objectives.

In terms of the data collection process, the researchers filed formal permission requests through the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Prince of Songkla University to the schools along with an explanation letter on research highlighting details on data collection procedures and instruments and other relevant documents that would be used in such data collection so that the school administrators could make informed considerations in allowing the researchers and the research team to visit and collect the data. Subsequently, the researchers contacted school coordinators or administrators and requested permission to conduct a field study and plan the data collection. Eventually, the researchers went to the schools as scheduled to collect the data. Bahasa and English were employed in the interviews. Content analysis was applied to the data to generate patterns and conclusions. The interviews were recorded in audio files and transcribed into texts. However, prosodies in the audio were disregarded for being irrelevant as this study aimed to extract and analyze content data. Subsequently, the transcribed texts were translated into Thai. In every cycle of transcription and translation, the researchers attempted to find the patterns that are related to this study. Preset codes were generated, tagged, and grouped through a deductive coding, whereas inductive coding was applied to emerging codes and themes. To preserve the key informants' privacy, their identifiable information was removed. Prior to the interviews, they were also asked for permission to collect the data and notified about the rights to protection of such data. After the interviews, the key informants were allowed to read the transcribed and translated data logs, check for accuracy, and provide feedback.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Practices in 21st-Century Learning Management

The study discovered that teachers in these Islamic schools employed student-centered teaching (Trilling and Fadel, 2009) by focusing on individual differences and needs, pedagogies with real-life connections, proactive learning processes, student collaboration, and the use of information and communications technology (ICT) tools (JISC, 2006; Yuh & Thamrongsotthisakul, 2020). Findings revealed that the schools employed six teaching strategies for their Islamic Education, including emphasizing individual differences, associating off-class experiences, integrating ICT, integrating scientific knowledge, bridging localness with internationalness, and considering modern evaluation. Details are as follows:

Emphasizing Individual Differences

Teaching in the 21st century can be extremely challenging when addressing students' needs. Many schools began to consider students' backgrounds and interests and attempted to design curriculums and pedagogies that could respond to their needs and learning paces while covering a complete range of Islamic teachings. According to the data collected from the ten schools in southern Thailand, some congruent findings were identified on 21st-century instructional frameworks, strategies, and competencies, i.e., stimulation of awareness and understanding as well as teachers' respect for students' identities, interests, and individual differences (see Excerpt 1 and 2).

Excerpt 1

What is more important, are the teachers' understanding of their students, since students differ greatly from one group to another. Thus, by understanding their differences, teachers can adopt the appropriate approach. It is no longer a case of "one size fits all" or one model fixes all situations. Therefore, at school, the teacher assigns tasks according to individual aptitudes and readiness of each student and evaluates more on development and less on student results.

Excerpt 2

One of the school's goals is to equally enhance students' potential and take part in fostering intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical identities. It can be seen that the school values individual differences and offers potential development based on their readiness and capacities.

Individual difference is a social factor that has been widely incorporated into teaching and regarded as a crucial principle in student-centered teaching in 21st-century education (Trilling and Fadel, 2009). Hence, educational institutions should not neglect these differences and should consider about it when designing curriculum, teaching activities (Sincer, Severiens, & Volman, 2019) and teaching strategies that would suit different class members (Suprayogi, Valcke, & Godwin, 2017) so that the teaching management could practically respond to students' differences on individual capacities and needs.

Associating Off-Class Experiences

The Islamic-education teachers attempted to associate Islamic Education to ways of life and off-class situations so that the students could appropriately apply the principles to practices and contexts. As exemplified, many schools assigned students to work on projects in connection with external communities and focused on authentic fieldwork experiences. For example, an Islamic-education course in Yala province was on a topic of Zakat (the obligation that an individual has to donate a certain proportion of wealth each year to charitable causes) and the teacher tasked the students with problems for their projects with connections to the Islamic teachings. The students worked on projects, e.g., about finance management and money saving. The students took primary roles from the beginning to the conclusion and reflection, and the teacher assessed them mainly on their work processes (see Excerpt 3). Another relevant case is the case of Pattani, which is a course on Islamic Ethics. Students were encouraged to do activities based on Islamic teachings and expand their activities to community cooperation in dealing with youth problems (See Excerpt 4).

Excerpt 3

The teaching of Islamic Education should give opportunities for students to analyze problems and needs of external communities, and use these elements to create classroom problems for the learning. In the course of Islamic Education, the teacher is there to guide the students through relevant Islamic teachings, while they draw connections to issues of interests. In each session, the teacher would give them the opportunity to explain these external problems and link reality to course contents so that they see relationships between what is being learned and external reality.

Excerpt 4

The teacher asked the students to work on projects within the course of Islamic Ethics. They were asked to analyze youth problems in their residential communities and work together to solve the problems. Islamic principles about morality and ethics were incorporated into a project to help solve problems for the affected youths.

Based on these findings, it was clear that off-class experiences are essential for in-class learning as students could learn and improve their skills from real-life situations. Similarly, the teaching of Islamic

Education requires knowledge and principles from texts to be associated with reality, social contexts, and cultures (Susilawati, Fernandes, Sylvia, & Putra, 2020), and such practical associations could occur when students learn through a process that involves defining, planning, doing, and reviewing (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Firstly, the learning could begin with an establishment of foundation knowledge of a project or an activity through a simple question about a topic. Secondly, when knowledge gaps are reduced or eliminated, students could start planning their projects or activities. Thirdly, run the planned activities or projects according to pre-determined guidelines, including designs on knowledge research methods and knowledge sharing. Fourthly, take actions with targeted communities that the students reside. Finally, the students review and reflect on learning. Through these steps, the students would have enough opportunities to draw connections from theories to real life and make use of their real-life skills to solve problems. This collaboration also helps maximize their professional potential and is widely recognized as an ideal strategy for 21st-century student development (Bell, 2010; Vidosavljević & Vidosavljević, 2018).

Integrating Information and Communication Technology

Technology, no doubt, is fascinating; the usage of technology in learning can substitute as a learning tool or even increase the learning capacity. Results reflect that “integrating Information and Communication Technology” was also highly crucial. A student can make use of one and the same technology in social media forums either to design PowerPoint and discourse or to communicate among teachers, students, and parents. There are competing ideas about using technological devices in the classroom. The teachers from Yala (Excerpt 5) and Pattani (Excerpt 6) elaborated that the use of ICT is vital as students will also need to utilize them again in the future. The study further found that every school encouraged the teachers to integrate ICT in every course with no exception to Islamic Education.

Excerpt 5

In learning, our students have opportunities to engage in collaborative activities and implement technological solutions to search, analyze, and synthesize various data. With technological facilitation, learning promotes their creativity, problem-solving abilities, intellectual capacities, and soft skills.

Excerpt 6

The school places emphasis on the use of technology in learning and tries to enhance teachers' ICT potential in teaching. Moreover, a Smart Classroom was developed in response to 21st-century educational management, and through this scheme, for instance, students are permitted to use mobile phones in some of their inquiry-based periods. Similarly, they have access to Facebook groups to exchange knowledge with their peers.

These notions signify the teachers' perception of the value of technology and how challenging it could become when they tried to incorporate technological solutions in Islamic Education (Dorroll & Dorroll, 2017). As many Islamic-education teachers were more familiar with traditional teaching strategies, e.g., lecturing, it is incredibly vital that they receive training on attitude adjustments in parallel with the development of ICT skills. Furthermore, with the support and teacher development efforts of the schools in the southern Thailand, it is no doubt why the Islamic-education teachers could demonstrate sufficient skills and readiness to utilize ICT in education. Also, they were willing to embrace new technology if it could improve the learning towards new-era education 21st-century skill development.

Integrating Science

An interesting notion involves the fact that the Islamic Education teachers perceived “integrating science” (including content and learning processes) as vital to pedagogical adjustments of the 21st century. In the past, Muslim educators prioritized Islamic-secular integrations or an Islamisation of knowledge with the aim to ensure that the learning meets the Islamic-education goals to cultivate a person with a complete understanding of Islam in all aspects and see Islam in all dimensions of life. However, only a few were found to integrate secular knowledge into Islamic subjects, and the school in Yala was one of the excellent examples. Through practices, the school could be a noteworthy model for other Islamic schools to follow when integrating different learning contents, especially the integration of Science into an Islamic course (see Excerpt 7 and 8).

Excerpt 7

The Quran discusses all things, including wonders and Science. When Science is mentioned in the Quran, Islamic-education teachers who teach the Quran must also understand and be able to transfer scientific knowledge within it to students. Hence, Science is a discipline that Islamic-education teachers should be able to teach their students through a Quran-science integration.

Excerpt 8

The school has goals for relationships between students, society, and environments. Therefore, Islamic-education curriculums usually contain subjects on environmental Science, nature conservation, and solutions to social problems based on the knowledge of the Quran. Islamic Education combines Islamic principles with relevant bodies of knowledge for students to learn to solve social problems.

Based on Excerpt 7 and 8, Islamic subjects being employed in Yala were different from the ones in other schools, which emphasized al-Quran, as-Sunnah, Fiqh, Islamic history, and Islamic ethics. Contrarily, the Islamic subjects of the school in Yala included conservation of natural resources - plantation - solid waste; and sustainable development (soil resources, resource utilization, and humans and poverty), and what is more interesting is that they are the subjects which the Islamic-education teachers were required to teach. The subjects received major modifications as the Islamic school attempted to adapt itself to respond to the needs of 21st-century education. In fact, Islamic Education could be taught through all areas of knowledge, including the principles of faith and Science (Bhutto, Kaloi, & Bhutto, 2020). So, the changes were practical in enabling Islamic Education to meet the new goals and prove that Islamic Education could revolve around new ideas to help students understand Islam in a more comprehensive way.

Bridging Localness with Internationalness

Current advances in information and communication technology have made the world smaller as global communication can go beyond sovereign borders. Consequently, Islamic Education teachers found “bridging localness with internationalness” almost equally essential. Similar conditions also apply to today’s educational contexts, which could shift back and forth between local and global environments. Therefore, it is imperative for students to also learn and understand non-local contexts which are beyond their native communities or areas. Being a global citizen is to understand cultural differences as well as fulfill roles and obligations at the local and international levels. Hence, students should be fostered to simultaneously learn and practice these skills. Also, current pedagogies should seek to bridge localness and internationalness together to nurture students towards being global citizens (See Excerpt 9 and 10).

Excerpt 9

Islamic schools must sacrifice some identities and move forward by creating national-international links and participating in social mainstreams, especially by addressing students' future professional needs on disciplines (e.g., Medicine, Engineering, Laws, Science, and Business). While universal skills are crucial characteristics of quality global citizens (e.g., communication, teamwork, and cultural skills), local identities, faiths, and ideologies also remain valid for the students to maintain.

Excerpt 10

Since Pattani is an area that is diverse in culture with rapid multidimensional development, the school needs to create and design curriculums and educational settings that are consistent with internationalness but also within the Islamic way. To do so, it is necessary to integrate the two together as none should be removed from the student-development equation.

The above instructional model is consistent with the concept known as “think globally, act locally” or “Glocal” proposed by (Castek & Dwyer, 2018), which aims to take down local walls and open up to universality. The purpose of such aims is to allow students to proudly present local and personal identities to the world. The notions about the schools reflect that Islamic schools could still progress towards excellence within an Islamic framework and bring benefits to the society at the local, national, and global levels. Furthermore, the teaching of Islamic Education could also contribute to the development of 21st-century skills and international competencies in maximizing students' capabilities to participate in local and non-local social development.

Considering Modern Evaluation

In general, the ten schools still employed traditional measurements and evaluations which focus on tests of knowledge in conjunction with the new ones that measure skills and processes. However, all of them reduced weights from test scores and emphasized more on student outcomes. Regarding this matter, the Islamic Education teachers highly agreed to “consider modern evaluation”. For instance, the school in Pattani employed inquiry-based pedagogies and primarily assessed students based on work results (see Excerpt 11). As for the school in Songkla, in the course of Islamic Education, students were assessed by a new 21st-century evaluation, which measures students through their daily practices and routines (see Excerpt 12).

Excerpt 11

The school uses inquiry-based learning. So, the assessment mainly considers the work of the students. However, the school still carries out knowledge tests, but compared to the past, fewer tests are being administered. Teachers evaluate students on knowledge-exchange processes, communication, and presentations. This means that the teachers evaluate them from participation and group work through behavioral observations using designated forms.

Excerpt 12

In Islamic Education, we try not to do as many content examinations as in the past. On the contrary, we try to measure our students from practices, and determine their developmental progress through their religious practices, records of good deeds, and actions in sharing goodness to others (e.g., students and peers in a group analyze values of Iman to life, summarize them on the charts, and post them on the school's public-relations board as a way to spread information to friends in the school.

According to Excerpt 11 and 12, in the 21st century, student evaluation methods have changed as new educational models now focus more on assessing skills than knowledge (Binkley et al., 2012; Griffin & Care, 2014; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008). Consequently, the transformation impacts

the learning in a sense that students subsequently had to learn more from practices and less from content memorization as when the focus is on applying theories to practices, knowledge examinations are no longer valid. Similarly, if teachers could find ways to promote better content and lesson comprehension and develop students to become familiar with practices, they would be able to visualize ideas and reflect it through behaviors and actions. On this note, memorizing only helps to store knowledge, but it could not prove whether students would be able to apply such knowledge in reality.

Challenges among Teachers in Modifying the Teaching of Islamic Education

Islamic schools in southern Thailand are facing multiple aspects of the challenge, with the main one being the fact that the schools are pressured to transform their pedagogies to address 21st-century education. The study revealed that the Islamic Education teachers faced three key challenges, including 1) personal attachment to conventional pedagogies, 2) obligation to comply with guidelines for the competency development of modern Islamic education teachers, and 3) subjects becoming less relevant to current social needs. The notion is consistent with problems highlighted by previous studies, such as attachment to traditional teaching styles, and instructional adaptation might require extensive time before teachers could leave obsolete teaching methods to embrace 21st-century teaching approaches (Assalihee & Boonsuk, 2022; Kuakul & Wae-useng, 2017). The detailed discussion is as follows:

Teachers' Attachment to Conventional Pedagogies

The Islamic Education teachers found “teachers’ attachment to conventional pedagogies” as the most challenging barrier. After exploring the ten target schools, it was found that most teachers were open to new teaching methods. However, a school administrator reflected that, in the past, the school had invested significant time and effort to promote understanding and encourage teachers to adapt and modernize teaching methods to catch up with the new era of education. Consequently, it became a great challenge for them to change their mindsets since they were used to teaching through traditional strategies and styles that they had been practicing for several years (see Excerpt 13 and 14 below as examples).

Excerpt 13

In the beginning, I was not familiar with the new teaching methods, but I tried to learn more about them and gradually change the teaching step by step. The key to success is to work together as a team in teaching preparation. In addition, the school requires each teacher to set up their own development plans based on individual aptitudes and readiness.

Excerpt 14

Teachers must understand in depth about changes in teaching methods. Their understanding transforms mindsets, improve developmental readiness, and offer more benefit to students. All teachers are ready to change for the better. They just need time, especially the older ones. Mastering new tools and teaching methods might be a time-consuming process.

Embracing a pedagogical paradigm shift by walking away from lecture-based classes to learning-process and skills development is considered a new adjustment that some teachers might be able to change quickly, while others might not. This notion is especially with Islamic-education teachers who regularly teach through giving lectures. Therefore, if schools expect teachers to change, it is essential to, firstly, help them change the way they think. A practical facilitation process for that is an establishment of a professional learning community. This type of community can promote better understanding, stimulate participation, offer opportunities for continuous knowledge exchanges, and

help teachers to formulate step-by-step action plans for transformation based on individual adaptation pace and readiness. Moreover, utilizing support from parents and external agencies would offer teachers a psychological comfort as they did not have to feel that they are going through changes alone and that they can count on friends and stakeholders who would be there to help them to reach their full potential. The schools in this study are considered successful in terms of leadership in unifying their teachers towards common directions in practices, goal fulfillment, and understanding.

Guidelines for the Competency Development of Modern Islamic-Education Teachers

Teachers in the ten schools were up against some of the biggest challenges in their professional lives when they had to formulate a competency training framework for teachers in a new-era education, especially in establishing a specialized system for Islamic-education development. Islamic-education development requires distinctive approaches when compared to the development for other disciplines as Islamic-education teachers tend to have different mindsets, obligations to teach unique contents, and student development goals, which are based on Islamic principles. It was, therefore, extremely challenging for them to participate in a research process and afford a self-development following the discussed direction. From the results, the schools and stakeholders should create a development model for Islamic-education teachers that are appropriate and consistent with teachers' needs, e.g., potential development for ICT utilization, teaching through modern techniques and methods, disciplinary integrations, (see Excerpt 15 and 16).

Excerpt 15

Developmental processes for Islamic-education teachers need to be adjusted so that teachers can apply new techniques and methods in their Islamic Education. For example, they could involve the use of scientific, problem-based, project-based processes, and teaching. Potential development could be done through integrations with other disciplines such as Islam and Science as well as Islam, Business, and finance.

Excerpt 16

Islamic pedagogies should incorporate ICT, and teachers should be trained to understand how ICT instruments could be used to promote teaching success based on educational goals in the 21st century. Moreover, schools should support enough equipment so that they can teach Islam with full ICT integrations and potential.

Developing Islamic-education teachers is an urgent issue as most of them are lacking the expertise and skills to integrate 21st-century teaching methods into Islamic-education courses. Hence, educators or stakeholders in teachers' professional development should analyze and prioritize needs that these teachers should develop. Skills should be enhanced for better ICT utilization (Al-Gumaei et al., 2019), and other skills and competencies that are necessary for 21st-century teaching should be integrated so that Islamic-education teachers effectively manage their 21st-century education while keeping Islamic Education relevant to contexts.

Subjects Being Less Applicable to Current Social Needs

The teachers were concerned about "subjects being less applicable to current social needs" due to social changes and the need to apply Islamic knowledge to emerging contexts. As elaborated in Excerpt 17 and 18, the findings show that the study of Islam in these schools is classical and not significant to the digital competency abilities. Many of the Islamic courses at these schools are instructed to satisfy the need of Islamic Education and its service prerequisites. Therefore, Islamic education in these establishments must be pertinent to the 21st-century competencies.

Excerpt 17

Teaching Islamic education does not mean that we ignore social needs as Islam is applicable regardless of eras. What matters is how principles are applied in conjunction with changing social contexts. Past Islamic teaching might not be suitable to today's contexts. Hence, students should be urged to think, analyze, synthesize, and create innovations based on the principles of Islam for personal and social benefits.

Excerpt 18

Islamic teaching must be more integrated and connected with current social reality, Science, and social sciences as it would help people see the values of Islam and understand how principles could be tangibly applied in modern days. This is especially important for believers of different religions to see that Islam can benefit everyone in every religion.

In response to the global and social changes, many courses need to be adjusted to fit new contexts as, without modification, they are too obsolete for modern applications. Nonetheless, this transition does not mean that Islamic teachings, especially al-Quran and as-Sunnah, are inapplicable for today's settings. It simply means that instructional and application processes for the principles require changes, and educators should discuss and develop solutions on these processes in relation to today's situations. Therefore, for Islamic Education to provide values to society considering shifts and changes, it should be integrated with other elements in a sense that could address new issues that the society is facing, e.g., Islamic Economic and Banking; Islamic Management; Islamic Business and Administration; Families; (Franceschelli & O'Brien, 2014), Youths, Societies, and Communities; Environments; (Khalid, 2002) and Justice (Rosen, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Educational management strategies in the 21st century, especially methods of teaching, has tremendously shifted, and the phenomenon impacted schools and teachers as they were pressured to adapt and accept changes to maintain the education relevant to real contexts in today's society. The transition from traditional to 21st-century teaching has been a great challenge for Islamic-education teachers as they were extensively familiar with lecture-based instructions. Nonetheless, now it is time for them to change if they wish to cultivate students of the future while simultaneously keeping them educated about Islamic knowledge and principles. This transition involves all parties, i.e., from administrators, employees, teachers, and parents. Essentially, all stakeholders must work together to support the teaching transition. According to the results derived from the twelve schools, it remained essential for their educational services to be modernized by implementing 21st century teaching management concepts. Evidently, there was political will creating a supportive tailwind as teachers apparently demonstrated the need for changes, took action, and adjusted their teaching methods to deliver tangible outcomes. However, there had been some barriers and limitations, as discussed earlier, that required all parties to join hands and solve the problems. The six teaching strategies could be a sound starting point for teachers to catch up with changes. However, more short- and long-term studies and assessments should be conducted to draw conclusions. Cultivating 21st-century students is a mission with great challenges and multidimensional process difficulties. This study could unveil only a fraction of knowledge as limitations of this study include the number of target schools being small and time allocation was short. However, this study considerably introduced new perspectives of Islamic-education teachers both in Thailand and abroad by presenting their efforts and implemented attempts to change teaching methods in the pedagogical transitions towards 21st-century educational goals. The extracted strategies were expected to be useful for teachers in Islamic Education and their teaching applications, especially in the contexts of Thailand where Islamic Education has been questioned by

many, whether it is responsive to the cultivation of 21st-century students. If teachers utilize these results, they might be able to partially answer that question, and the teaching of Islamic Education in Thailand might be improved to stay as relevant as other disciplines as well as develop individuals' competencies based on national and social needs

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